

**NEVER JUDGE A
BOOK
BY ITS COVER,**

AND OTHER IMPORTANT

LESSONS ABOUT

ASTHMA FOR

CUSTODIANS

OUTNUMBER MICHIGAN STUDENTS

2,430,000 TO **1** IN THE

TYPICAL CLASSROOM.



These invisible critters can literally run students out of class.

Dust mites trigger asthma symptoms during school making it difficult, sometimes impossible to learn.

Among those who reported at least one asthma attack in the previous year, children 5-17 years of age missed 14.7 million school days due to asthma nationally.

Have you worked to reduce all the triggers in your school?



OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Dear Custodian:

This is yet another health information kit to cross your path, but don't judge it too quickly. Unlike many other kits, this one was derived from surveys and interviews of hundreds of Michigan custodians like you. As a result, we know you don't need or want big binders of unnecessary information. That's why this short book contains only the most vital information necessary for you to respond effectively to asthma, and to improve the quality of life in your school. Take a few minutes to read this handbook (approximately 10 minutes). Complete your asthma checklist. Be sure you have eliminated all possible triggers. We promise you'll breathe easier about the status of asthma care in your school. After all, everyone has the right to breathe easy.

- Asthma Initiative of Michigan

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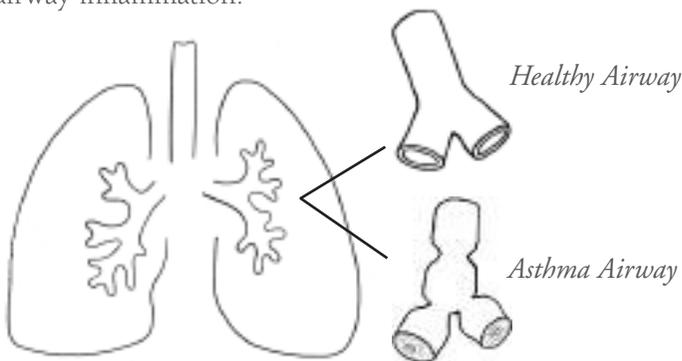
WHAT’S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Asthma is not serious enough for me to become concerned about it.”

True or False

FALSE: *Children can and have died from asthma episodes suffered in school. One school was sued for \$9 million for an unnecessary student death due to asthma. But thousands of children suffer less severely every day in school.*

THE DISEASE - Here's the nitty-gritty. Asthma is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes the airway lining to become inflamed and swollen, blocking airflow (see diagram below). Mucus production and muscle spasm further block airflow. These complications cause asthma symptoms. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, and breathing difficulty. These symptoms range in seriousness from bothersome to life threatening. Over time asthma can result in permanent tissue damage and chronic airway inflammation.



Worse still, no known cure for asthma exists. Asthma symptoms, however, can be managed. In fact, long-term control medicines, preventive use of quick-relief medications (e.g., inhalers and nebulizers), and reducing asthma triggers can prevent symptoms from ever developing and reduce the chances of life-threatening symptoms. Without you, however, effective asthma management is not possible.

~~ASTHMA ATTACK!~~

ATTACK ASTHMA!



Waiting for a violent asthma attack to confirm a student suffers from asthma? Stop waiting! The only way to attack asthma is to attack its symptoms, however mild they may seem. Shortness of breath, persistent coughing, and wheezing all result in missed school days, activities, and... yes... even death.

Do you know how to battle asthma by addressing its symptoms?

ASTHMA
it's more serious than you think.

WHY CARE - *You should care because*

nationally asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. In 2001, 14 million school absences were due to asthma. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on School Health, many parents keep their kids home because they fear school employees cannot properly manage or respond to a student with asthma. Overall, nearly 5 million children under the age of 18 have been diagnosed with asthma, and a great deal more remain undiagnosed. To make matters worse, asthma rates have nearly quadrupled in the last 15 years.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Managing asthma will take too much time and effort to be worthwhile.”

True or False

FALSE: *With this book, managing asthma should be simple. Here's all you really need to know:*

- 1) *how to respond to an asthma emergency,*
- 2) *the new laws about inhaler use,*
- 3) *what triggers are common in schools, and*
- 4) *how to track and manage asthma.*

You should care because students with asthma can die. But even those who do not suffer life-threatening symptoms risk devastating consequences associated with difficulty breathing. Students with poorly controlled asthma often feel tired, fearful, distracted, or unable to think. Many simply miss school because their parents aren't confident that the school is a safe place for a child with asthma. We know asthma may seem like a minor problem. But don't be fooled. Asthma is a pervasive disease that has a significant impact on youth in your school.

You should care because you can make a significant difference in the lives of a large group of your students. Though serious, asthma poses little threat when managed effectively. The difference in schools is simple... you. You can control many of the harmful triggers of asthma. We suggest you check your school for triggers (see triggers list, page 9 and checklist, page 17) and learn how to respond to an asthma emergency. We know student health is not your job directly, but asthma is unique. Ultimately, you influence how much these dangerous triggers affect students in your school.

IF YOU DON'T THINK **NOT** BEING

ABLE TO **BREATHE**



IS BAD, TRY IT SOMETIME.

To get a better idea, try breathing through a straw—
it's even worse than the double negative you just
read. Sadly, each school day children sit in
classrooms filled with things that trigger attacks.
Dust, molds, furry class pets, even perfume can all
cause asthma symptoms. Worse still, a recent survey
found that many school workers don't think asthma is
really that serious. At the same time, triggers abound.

Do you know what they are?



WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Cold weather alone can trigger asthma symptoms.”

True or False

TRUE: Studies demonstrate that cold air causes symptoms in most children with asthma. Extra caution should be used to manage children's asthma when they are outside in the cold. Make sure to read your students' asthma action plans so you know how to deal with each child if weather is a trigger.

ASTHMA TRIGGERS - Many of us have a limited knowledge of asthma triggers. Below are some of the known common causes of asthma symptoms (unranked). As you read, take note of how many triggers are common in your own school.

- Weather
 - Exposure to cold air
 - Sudden temperature change
- Vigorous exercise
- Emotional stress
- Infections
 - Common cold
 - Influenza
 - Respiratory infections
- Allergies
 - Furry/feathery animals (i.e., pets)
 - Pollen

- Feathers
- Molds
- Some foods
- House dust
- Dust mites
- Pesticides
- Dusts and Vapors from
 - Plastics
 - Grains
 - Metals
 - Wood
 - Solvents
- Air pollution
 - Perfumes
 - Cigarette smoke (even on clothing)
 - Ozone
 - Sulfur Dioxide
 - Auto exhaust
- Drugs
 - Aspirin
 - Ibuprofen
 - Some heart medications
- Others
 - New furnishings or equipment
 - Chalk
 - Dust
 - Strong odors (e.g., magic markers, perfumes, or glues)

Individual students may have additional triggers not on this list—another good reason to have an asthma action plan handy.

CAN I **GET** A LITTLE **RESPECT**

AROUND HERE?



Asthma may easily be the Rodney Dangerfield of diseases. Many students with asthma are not identified or tracked during the school year. To make matters worse, school environments are not checked routinely for asthma triggers. The disease is too serious to disrespect. Efforts to maintain an asthma safe school won't go unnoticed by students.

Do you know how to maintain an asthma safe school?



ASTHMA SYMPTOMS - Triggers

cause symptoms, but people react to asthma in different ways. Below is a list of asthma symptoms. Each symptom varies in seriousness from minor exacerbations to asthma emergencies. Most of us cannot grade the seriousness of a given symptom by its appearance. If you encounter a student with asthma, you must RESPOND TO ALL SYMPTOMS IMMEDIATELY. Remember that this list is here for your future reference.

- Changes in breathing
 - Increased or persistent coughing
 - Wheezing
 - Breathing through the mouth
 - Shortness of breath
 - Rapid breathing
 - Difficulty breathing

- Other signs
 - Itchy chin or neck
 - “Clipped” speech (short, choppy sentences)
 - Difficulty walking
 - Fearful behavior
 - Nostrils flare when breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Agitation
 - Increased pulse rate

Allergy symptoms
Blue lips or fingertips
Sucking in of skin around chest/neck

- Verbal Complaints
 - “My chest is tight.”
 - “My chest hurts.”
 - “My neck feels funny.”
 - “My mouth is dry.”
 - “I don’t feel well.”
 - “I can’t catch my breath.”

REMEMBER, seemingly minor symptoms can have devastating effects. Plus, minor symptoms can quickly become life threatening. That’s just how asthma works. Therefore, don’t ignore the seriousness of an apparently minor symptom, like persistent coughing. Regular coughing requires a quick response, which is outlined for you next.

WHAT’S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Kids with asthma are generally in worse physical shape and lazier than kids without asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: *Asthma is not related to laziness. In fact, many Olympic athletes have asthma. The only difference between the student who can’t participate in gym class and the Olympic athlete is that the athlete manages their asthma with proper medications. The student might not even be aware that he/she has asthma, let alone have the proper medications.*

LOOK MA,

NO BRAINS.



Oftentimes a little knowledge can do a world of good.

For example, many people don't realize that asthma rates have quadrupled in the past 15 years.

The disease quickly has become so common that many custodians aren't adequately prepared to reduce or respond to it. That's not good. Because, while you have other things to do, students are counting on you to create a safe learning environment.

How much do you know about asthma?



WHAT TO DO - If a student shows any of the previously listed asthma symptoms, you **MUST TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY**. Below is a 7-step plan outlining what to do. Follow these in the order presented.

1. Stop child's activity and move him/her away from the trigger that started the symptom(s).
2. Stay calm, speak reassuringly, & provide privacy.
3. Allow student to choose sitting or standing position
 - Never force a student to recline
4. Find and follow medication requirements in asthma action plan.
 - If student has no plan and no medication, call 911 as quickly as possible.
5. Call health professional in school.
6. If no response to medication after 5 to 10 minutes, call 911.
7. Monitor for 4 hours.
 - If symptom(s) reappear, call 911.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

"Putting a paper bag over a child's mouth or nose during an asthma attack **can kill** him/her."

True or False

TRUE: *Never, ever, put a paper bag over the mouth or nose of someone displaying asthma symptoms. **You can kill him/her.***

ASTHMA IS **SWEEPING**
THE NATION!



By now we hope you realize asthma is a serious problem in Michigan. And hopefully you know that your job is vital to the health of all school children, especially those with asthma. Dusting, removal of odors, proper storage of chemicals, and monitoring the school's HVAC system are some of the important steps to maintaining a healthy school.

So how healthy is your school?



CUSTODIAN’S CHECKLIST - This is a list of

basic trigger-reducing behaviors for you to engage in if you wish to help reduce complications from asthma. If you can respond “yes” to each of the following items, you will be doing an adequate job of reducing triggers in your school.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you do the following to reduce triggers in carpet: | NO | YES |
| a) Remove all rugs and carpets where possible? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Vacuum carpeted areas daily with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter or cleaner? | | |
| c) Steam clean carpets once a year with a truck-mounted 190 degree F steam? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Dry carpet within 24 hours to prevent microbial growth? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Vacuum after students are out of school? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Replace/clean horizontal blinds? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you do the following to reduce triggers on hard floors: | NO | YES |
| a) Dust with static electricity or mineral oil treated mops daily? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Wet mop weekly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you do the following to reduce triggers from cleaning supplies: | NO | YES |
| a) Replace all your cleaning materials that add chemicals to the air of classrooms with safer, effective alternatives? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

	NO	YES
b) Use white or apple cider vinegar to remove mold, mineral deposits, and crayon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Use baking soda as a general cleaner (can also be used as a room rug deodorizer or refrigerator deodorizer)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Use club soda as a spot remover?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Provide liquid rather than bar soap (mild or unscented) for hand washing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Clean woodwork weekly with a damp cloth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Use fume-emitting cleaning materials only when students or staff are not nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Quickly replace caps to bottles with strong fumes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you do the following to reduce triggers from pests:	NO	YES
a) Refrain from using pesticides and herbicides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Use Integrated Pest Management (see IPM website in resources)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you do the following to reduce triggers from HVAC systems:	NO	YES
a) Use air conditioners or dehumidifiers to maintain 35-45% relative humidity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Routinely inspect HVAC systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Change air filters every 2 weeks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Clean fan blades and front grate monthly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Face fans outward toward window to reduce pollen and pollution intake?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Avoid belt-type humidifiers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ONE SCHOOL **COUGHED-UP**

\$9 MILLION FOR FAILING TO



RESPOND
TO ASTHMA.

Getting harder to breathe? Don't be fooled by how insignificant asthma seems. One California school was sued to the tune of \$9 million for its negligent response to asthma. Asthma is the most common chronic disease in Michigan schools, and its effects are often underestimated or ignored. The American Lung Association has found that asthma lurks undetected in many Michigan schools. Can you afford \$9 million?



ASTHMA ACTION PLAN - We've

mentioned the asthma action plan repeatedly. Wondering what it is? Well, we've included an asthma action plan in your folder. If you know a student has asthma, refer to the student's file for an asthma action plan. If there is not a current one on file, encourage the student's parent/guardian to follow up with their physician for an individualized plan, and keep a copy at the school for reference.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Children often grow out of asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: *Once you have asthma you always have it. Some children show no symptoms in their teen years. Others do. Symptoms can reappear at any age. If you wait for children to “grow out” of asthma rather than learn how to cope with and manage the disease, you put their health and psychosocial development at serious risk.*

We've also included some information on integrated pest management and other links you might find helpful in the resource list. Perhaps the worst failure a custodian could make in responding to asthma is to overlook asthma triggers in the school. Take some time to go through the checklist and reduce as many triggers as possible. The more the better.

RESOURCE LIST - We hope you found this manual useful. At the same time, it was never intended to be an exhaustive resource. Should you need or want more information about the disease or IPM, we've provided a list (below) of organizations and websites that can provide you with comprehensive information.

1. **Michigan Resources**

- a. **Asthma Initiative of Michigan:**
1-866-EZLUNGS (395-8647), www.getasthmahelp.org
- b. **Michigan Asthma Coalitions:**
<http://getasthmahelp.org/UserCoalitionList.asp>
- c. **Michigan Association of School Nurses:**
734-992-2223, <http://www.michiganschoolnurses.org/>
- d. **National Jewish Medical Research Center (Lung line):** 1-800-222-5864, www.njc.org

2. **National Resources**

- a. **Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics, Inc.:** 1-800-878-4403, www.aanma.org
 - Breatherville USA,
<http://www.aanma.org/breatherville.htm>
- b. **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology:** 1-800-822-2762, www.aaaai.org
- c. **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:** 1-877-2-ASTHMA, www.asthmaandallergies.org
- d. **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology:** 1-800-842-7777, www.allergy.mcg.edu

- e. **American Lung Association:** 1-800-LUNG USA,
www.lungusa.org
 - School Programs
 - Open Airways for Schools
- f. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**
 - National Center for Environmental Health:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/default.htm>
 - Strategies for Addressing Asthma with a Coordinated School Health Program:
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/00_pdf/asthma.pdf
- g. **NHLBI Health Information Center:**
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/index.htm>
- h. **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:**
1-800-438-4318
 - Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse,
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tfs/guideh.html
 - Integrated Pest Management for Schools,
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/index.html>

- 3. **National Education Association Health Information Network, Asthma and Schools website:**
www.asthmaandschools.org

**THE END,
BUT DON'T STOP NOW!**

“YOU MUST ACT.”

True or False

***TRUE:** It takes some effort, but you must respond to the threat of asthma. Use your checklist as a guide to what you need to do next. To answer any questions, and to schedule a (dreaded) in-service, just contact us. We'd love to help you respond to asthma in the best ways possible.*



For more information, more books,
or just more help with asthma, call the
American Lung Association of Michigan at
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